



FIA Matters!

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Produced by FIA Office of Communications, Suite 1510, Grand Tower, Lansing
Submit stories by e-mail to FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Today's big story



A tail-waggin' Christmas in Iraq

From Lori Stettler
Hillsdale County FIA, Hillsdale
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On Nov. 9 the Hillsdale County FIA had a craft luncheon to benefit the military K-9 units and their handlers who are currently serving in Iraq. For a donation, staff members were invited to have a barbecue sandwich and chip luncheon. During the lunch staff made holiday bags (above) for soldiers. The bags were then filled with a Christmas card, a DVD, and microwave popcorn. Each of the military working dogs received a personalized Christmas stocking filled with treats, toys and luxury items that were donated by staff members.

Hillsdale County FIA has been providing the troops and their K-9 units with care packages since U.S. soldiers were first stationed overseas. What started out as a small gift box has since ballooned into a very fulfilling effort.

Linda Cunningham, family independence specialist lead worker, took the initiative to coordinate this project. The staff of Hillsdale would like to take this opportunity to tell Linda thank you and also to thank our director, Connie Dykman, for being so supportive and allowing staff to have luncheons and fund raisers for our "furry defenders."

Hillsdale staff receive almost weekly updates from the soldiers and pictures of the dogs and their handlers. A plaque from the military troops was sent to Hillsdale FIA and the dog handlers refer to our group as "Fairy Dog Mothers." This effort has really been well received - we have received donations from individuals, companies, and of course, other FIA offices.

The Hillsdale County FIA staff would like to wish everyone in the FIA family a safe and merry Christmas and a special thanks to the troops overseas for all they do. If you are part of a military family, please relay a special merry Christmas and thanks to your soldier from us!

FIA heroes and extra milers feted at awards program

During a Dec. 14 program in Lansing the FIA awarded 16 "Hero" and "Going the Extra Mile" awards to deserving staff members from around the state. Award winners were nominated by peers and/or managers for outstanding work and community leadership and were selected through a regional process.

Award winners included:

- Program manager **Ronald Lemmon** of Bay County.
- Family independence specialist **Carolyn Kaatz** of Jackson County.
- Foster care specialist **Veronique Lewis** of Wayne County South Central CFS District.
- Information technology technician **Tricia Hunter** of Gratiot-Clinton FIA.
- Services specialist **Tammy Huotari** of Chippewa-Luce FIA.
- **David Russell** of FIA Office of Inspector General.
- **Janet Strope**, director of FIA Family Support Division in Lansing.
- Youth specialist **Donovan Farr** from Nokomis Challenge Center in Prudenville.
- Services specialist **Jane Sawin** of Wexford-Missaukee FIA in Cadillac.
- Family independence specialist **Laura Sierpien** with Macomb County FIA Warren District.
- Family independence specialist **James Gura** of Wayne County FIA Gratiot-7 Mile District.
- Eligibility specialist **Consuelo Harris** of Wayne County FIA Fort Wayne District.
- Family independence specialist **Cindy Lipka** of Grand Traverse-Leelanau FIA.
- Family resource specialist **Karen Bowen** of Kent County FIA.
- Eligibility specialist **Betty Seckinger** of Ingham County FIA.
- A posthumous award was presented to relatives of the late **Rita Riddle**, a zone specialist.

Information on this year's winners will be posted on the "Employee Information" link at FIA-Net and at www.michigan.gov/fia under "Press Releases".

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FIA name change delayed to March 15, 2005

Gov. Granholm issued Executive Order 2004-38 that changed the date of the Family Independence Agency name change to March 15, 2005. Review **Executive Order 2004-38** at www.michigan.gov/gov under "Executive Orders".

Mecosta Polaski days

From Diana Witbeck

Mecosta County FIA, Big Rapids

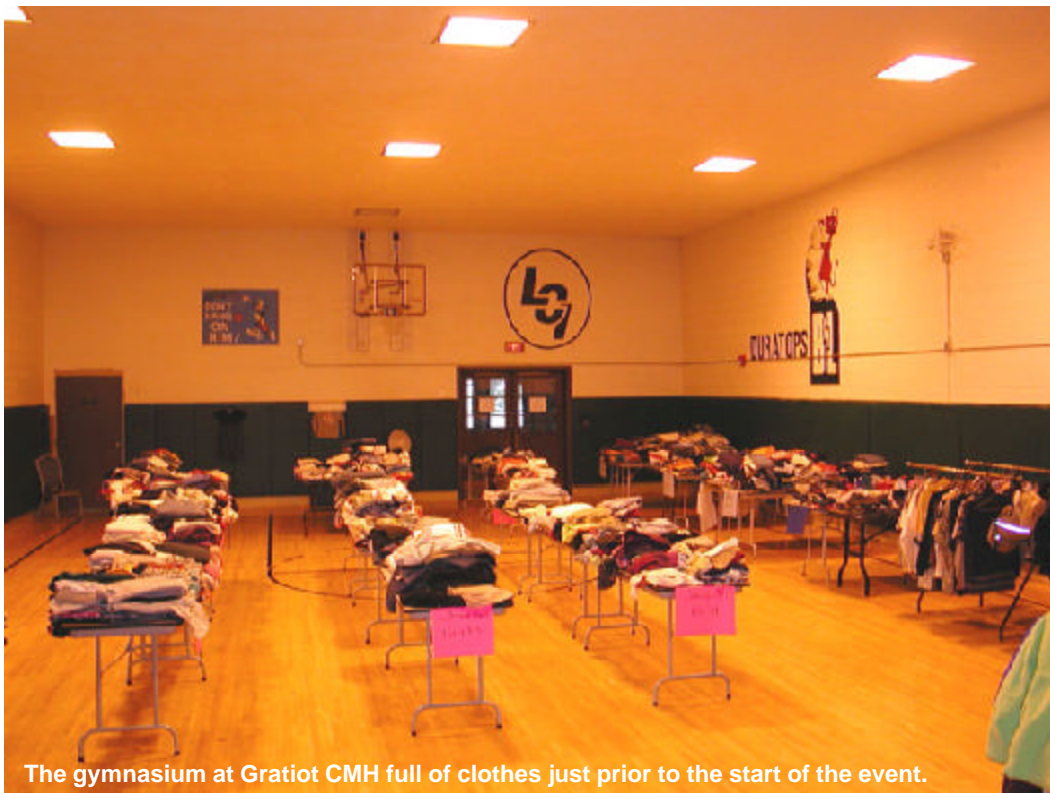
WitbeckD@michigan.gov

On Oct. 7 Mecosta County FIA staff celebrated Polaski Day in honor of the Polish heritage of several of our staff members. The staff enjoyed a background of the best in polka music while we ate a feast of kraut, kielbasa, golabkis, and other Polish foods.

A contest was held for best joke – which were altered to be politically correct – and prizes were given for the best joke and joke teller. During a 'treat walk' attendees enjoyed more great polka music and shared a variety of desserts. The Mecosta FIA Diversity Committee sponsored the event.



Cass County FIA staff held a luncheon Nov. 3 in honor of eligibility specialist **Karee McGrew**, a staff member who is in the Michigan Army Reserve and is currently stationed Iraq. She also served in Desert Storm.



The gymnasium at Gratiot CMH full of clothes just prior to the start of the event.

Gratiot FIA partners help clothe school kids & families

By Dan Carley, Community Resource Coordinator

Clinton-Gratiot County FIA

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On Aug. 25 the Gratiot County FIA office, in collaboration with many of its community partners, spearheaded a free back to school clothing event. Any self-identified low-income family was welcome to come in and get the clothing their child needed to start off the school year on the right note.

In total the event serviced 217 children from 83 different families. The project was sponsored in whole by employees from the Gratiot County Community Mental Health, Gratiot County Health Department, Gratiot Community Hospital, Alma College, Gratiot County Juvenile Court, local Work First staff, and Gratiot County FIA.

CFS district honors staff with appreciation breakfast

From Jacqueline Warfield
Wayne County CFS –
Central Operations, Detroit
WarfieldJ@michigan.gov

The Wayne County Child and Family Services Central Operations District management team showed staff how much their hard work and commitment are appreciated by sponsoring an employee appreciation breakfast Dec. 8. Managers served employees a wonderful hot breakfast prepared and served by the entire management team.

Staff enjoyed food, games, music, fun and laughter. Everyone came together and made this event a huge success. The breakfast was one of the events initiated by FUN – Friends United Network, a Central Operations committee comprised of managers and employees. Its purpose is to boost and maintain employee morale.

The giving keeps on in Kent County

From Mary Schoen
Kent County FIA, Grand Rapids

SchoenM@michigan.gov

The staff members at Kent County FIA are a very generous group of people – not just during the Christmas season but throughout the entire year.

Many, if not all, Fridays are now designated “Jeans day”. Staff members pay a minimum of \$5 to wear jeans and the proceeds go to the chosen charity for that day. So far in 2004 contributions have totaled \$19,777 ... and the Christmas season hasn't even arrived yet.

This isn't a new thing for Kent County. “Jeans days” began in 1998 with the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation collection in October of that year. That year, for that one event, Kent collected \$842. In 1999 they again collected for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and collected \$995.

From there Kent's generosity grew. They decided there were other charities they would like to assist. In 2000 they raised a little over \$4,500 for four different charities. In 2001 the charities grew to 10 and the amount raised increased to \$13,622. In 2002, there were 32 charities with a combined total raised of \$18,407.

In 2003, the charities grew to 35, while the amount raised totaled \$21,327. When you add it all up, Kent County has raised over \$79,000.00 for local charities since 1998 besides hosting food, clothing and book drives that did not include money.

Despite current economic conditions, our employees continue to give. That says a lot for the kind of employees we have here at Kent County. Thank you Kent County staff!

“Talk of the town” show benefits foster kids

From Teresa Marshall, CPS Program Manager
North Central Child & Family Services,
Highland Park

MarshallT@michigan.gov

On Nov. 17 Western Wayne Child and Family Services held a fashion show fundraiser with all proceeds going toward the Christmas party for children who are in foster care and served by the Western Wayne district.

This event was due in large part to the monumental effort put forth by chairperson **Beverly Harper**, a social services specialist at Western Wayne CFS. Harper solicited donations for all food, door prizes and more from local merchants. Tickets for the event were sold throughout the county as well as to court and community agencies.

The models consisted of several Western Wayne staff members as well as guest models – the Hon. Sheila Gibson Manning, judge of the Wayne County Third Judicial Circuit Court, and court referees Richard Smart, Peter Schummer Jr. and Aileen Fruitman.

The event was definitely the “talk of the town” and raised enough money to pay for all of the expenses for the Western Wayne children's Christmas party for 2004. Many thanks go to Beverly for her hard work and her commitment to the children of Western Wayne CFS.

Muskegon employee locked up

From Shirley Riley
Muskegon County FIA, Muskegon
RileyS2@michigan.gov

On Sept. 16 fellow employees of Muskegon County FIA child welfare manager **Jimmie Lang-Montgomery** had her thrown into the “slammer”!

But her imprisonment was all for a good cause – to raise much needed funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Association fundraiser. All proceeds went to local health services and worldwide research efforts. Jimmie's bail was set at \$1,000.

Her only complaint during her day behind bars was how cold it was during her confinement. Despite her shivering Jimmie was willing to remain until she raised her bail. Jimmie's co-workers donated a total of \$445 toward her bail.



Next issue in '05

This will be the final issue of FIA Matters! for 2004. Enjoy the holidays and see you in 2005!

Please send your newsletter stories & photos to
FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Date: Dec. 2
To: **Sandra Cheatem-Dooley**, Family Independence Specialist
Macomb County FIA Sterling Heights District, Sterling Heights
Subj: Donna Little

Thank you for the assistance you gave to my constituent Donna Little. Without your patience, sincere concern and the financial assistance you were able to give this family, I can't imagine what they would have done.

Together with the donation from the Marge Notte Foundation and the \$900 from FIA, Ms. Little was able to get her car out of the shop. Two days later (a family member) suffered a stroke and had to be rushed to the Medical Center in Ann Arbor.

Without a car in running order that would have been impossible. Yesterday he was back in Ann Arbor to have some procedures; he may be undergoing surgery soon to have a brain tumor removed. At last there is a dependable car to take him to his medical appointments.

This family cannot thank you enough and neither can I. I appreciate all you and your colleagues do for the citizens of this county and I am especially heartened by all you do for my constituents in Sterling Heights.

Michael Switalski, State Senator
Roseville

Date: Nov. 6
To: **Robyn Loviska**, Director
Schoolcraft County FIA, Manistique
Subj: My sister

I came to Manistique, Mich. to find my sister Debbie Daniel, whom I had been looking for six months. I would have never found Debbie without the assistance from **Shawn Maki** (and **Jeremy Spriks**). Debbie is 48, deaf and was born with cerebral palsy. Debbie is not able to communicate with people unless they know sign language. Once the authorities called Adult Services, Shawn and Jeremy were able to contact us and start the process of getting Debbie back with her family.

Debbie is married (and her husband) was arrested on an outstanding warrant from Texas. Debbie was left in their home in Manistique alone for two weeks without heat and not knowing anyone. (Her husband) convinced Debbie that the police were looking for her also. She really thought she was going to jail too.

Shawn and Jeremy were a great deal of help to my family. Shawn was able to write and communicate with Debbie and find out who to notify. Shawn called my mother and told her where (Debbie) was and (that) she wanted to come home. My husband and I flew to Manistique to bring Debbie home.

Debbie is a faithful Christian and said angels were with her in Manistique. God had two angels with her when Shawn and Jeremy came into the picture. They were able to contact the right people every time we came upon another roadblock.

Words cannot explain the amount of gratitude my family has for Shawn and Jeremy. We could not have accomplished what we did without their help.

I want to thank your agency for helping my family with getting Debbie back home safe and with her family. I cannot thank your agency enough for the help.

Laura Hendricks
Mead, Oklahoma

■ *Shawn Maki is adult services specialist and Jeremy Spriks is CPS specialist for Schoolcraft County FIA.*

**Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise**

FIA Matters! is a product of
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